(ii) In March, '96, the Council drew up a set of guidelines expected to be observed by the Press while publishing reports on the election process. It had appointed panelists all over the country to monitor the role of the media during the period of last general elections.

(iii) Further, in view of the staggered polls during the last Parliamentary Elections, the Council issued on 19th April, '96, the exit-poll guidelines appealing to the Press not to publish the exit-poll surveys, however, genuine they may be, till the last of the polls was held. This was with a view to ensure that the electoral process was kept pure and the voters' mind was not influenced by external factors.

(iv) The effect of these guidelines was encouraging as the Press by and large heeded to the advice and the guidelines of the PCI in the matter of pre-poll and exit-poll surveys and the coverage of the election process.

Telephone Under "Safe Custody".

*579. SHRI RAM SAGAR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the telephones are placed under the safe custody only on deposit of charges as demanded by Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited/Telecommunications;

(b) if so, the criteria adopted therefor;

(c) the period for which the telephone can be kept under the safe custody;

(d) whether in such cases the regular telephone bills including the rent charges are sent to the subscribers;

(e) if so, the reasons for sending regular bills to subscribers;

(f) the reasons for inordinate delay in placing the telephone under safe custody and restoring the same on request; and

(g) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to check such delay and billings ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (d) Safe custody of telephones are of two types :

1. Short term safe custody.
2. Long term safe custody.

Short term safe custody

Only the telephones working from non electronic exchanges and from electronic exchanges having no dynamic locking facility are permitted to be put under short term safe custody. The minimum period of safe custody is seven days and the maximum period is 90 days. The rental charges for the short term safe custody period are collected through telephone bills.

Long term safe custody

(i) Telephone connections from non-electronic exchanges and from electronic exchanges having no dynamic locking facility can be put under long term safe custody. The minimum period for long term safe custody for these type of telephone connections is more than three months.

(ii) Telephone connections working from electronic exchanges having dynamic locking facility can be put under long term safe custody for a minimum period of over six months.

The charges for telephones put under long term safe custody are payable in advance.

(e) Regular bills are sent to the subscribers since the rentals for short term safe custody are not collected in advance.

(f) The prescribed period for putting telephone under long term safe custody is seven days. Restoration period for long term safe custody is one month on receipt of request. For short term safe custody telephones, it is one week.

(g) MTNL/Telecom Circles monitor the implementation of the prescribed norms and the procedure.

[Translation]

Advertisements by SAIL

*580. SHRI R.L.P. VERMA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) the annual amount provided for advertisements by the Steel Authority of India Limited and the details of expenditure incurred thereon during each of the last three years;

(b) whether advertisements help in increasing the sale of Steel and the rate of increase in the production is in proportion to that of the expenditure incurred on the advertisements; and

(c) if so, the details of increase in production and the increase in the expenditure on advertisements during the above period ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) The annual amount provided for advertisements and publicity by Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), including expenditure on statutory advertisements etc. in the last three years, has been Rs. 13 crores (1993-94), Rs. 20 crores (1994-95), and Rs. 25 crores (1995-96). The